

LEDERER, E.



THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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November 2, 1978

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Mrs. Eppy Lederer
Chicago Sun-Times
401 N. Wabash Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611

Dear Eppy:

I was very pleased that you thought to send me a copy of your new encyclopedia. You must have been quite thrilled to see this come out. Although anything that covers such a broad range of human affairs as this does inevitably must have some mistakes, and even more certainly includes some controversy, I am sure that it will contribute to a more sensible and orderly and happy arrangement of many people's lives; and that you can take a great deal of gratification from that as you already do from the other manifestations of your career.

So what I have to say now is just picking a very tiny nit but I know that you would want to be informed about these, when you come out with another of what I am sure will be many editions. On page 404 you attribute certain statements to me about LSD that are simply not mine. I have not worked myself on LSD but have served on various committees evaluating it and the main thrust of my own conclusions has been precisely what you indicated: that the case about its genetic hazards is simply not proven. It would of course be unethical to do a controlled experiment in human beings with this material and particularly for studying the possibility of adverse genetic effect and it is unlikely that we ever will have a final and conclusive answer. Observational studies on groups of people who have taken LSD are almost useless for scientific purposes since these individuals are inevitably peculiar in a large number of characteristics and one can hardly be sure that any difference in outcome is simply to the chemical itself.

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For example, it is almost certain that LSD users will have a higher experience of hepatitis than the rest of the population. Furthermore, very few people who take LSD have had access to the chemically pure compound and it is almost impossible to know just what is contained in the street preparations that are sold as "LSD".

In any case, it is just incorrect to say that Lederberg, notably above others, has made claims about chromosome breaking effects that have been not substantiated by others in the light of what I have just told you. Lest you think this is a retrospective reconstruction I am enclosing some of the few previous writings that I made on this particular subject.

This is probably the most innocent of the circumstances in which I have been accused of holding an advocacy position on a subject, where I was strongly attempting to offer a balanced review of the available information provided by others: so I do not want you to think that I feel particularly badly about this. But I was sure that you would want to include this in the list of corrigenda for future writings. Unfortunately, statements like this tend to have a snowballing effect, are reguoted by others and the very fact that they appeared under your own name gives them an authenticity that they would not otherwise have.

With best wishes for your continued good work.

Yours affectionately,


Joshua Lederberg